
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

To members of the English Health Statistics Steering Group

23 March 2018

Dear Colleagues

The Office for Statistics Regulation's work to improve the coherence and accessibility of statistics on health and social care in England

As you are aware, we have invested considerable focus since 2015 to the system of producing health and social care statistics in England to increase the public value of these statistics. Through direct engagement [including convening three high level Round Tables and two large user conferences](#), we have helped to address the systemic issues around leadership which had resulted in a lack of coordination across the component parts of the system and confusion for users about these vital statistics.

It is now an appropriate time for us to hand over the co-ordination role to you, the English Health Statistics Steering Group (EHSSG). The setting up of the EHSSG in 2016 was a clear signal from within the system that the issues we identified had been recognised and a concerted effort was going to be made to:

- Align publication dates
- Remove duplication of statistical releases
- Harmonise methodology and definitions
- Increase user engagement

We are confident that the foundations for improvements have been laid and are visible in some statistical outputs, such as, the joint Public Health England and Office for National Statistics release on Cancer Survival statistics and the statistics on Alcohol Consumption. There are further opportunities for improvement, such as using the powers conferred by the Digital Economy Act to strengthen collaborative working, enable data sharing and data linking.

The EHSSG has developed the [Health and Care Statistics Action Plan](#), against which progress has been made. We now believe that to prevent gains being lost and allow this work to deliver on its potential **the EHSSG needs to:**

- Develop and implement a user/stakeholder engagement strategy, taking into account the wide range of users and information needs
- Develop a long term strategy for improving coherence and accessibility of statistics and embed this in an operating model
- Publish a progress update against the 2017 EHSSG work plan and develop a new work plan which goes further, giving consideration to data linkage

- Publish action plans for each topic network group and monitor progress against these
- Implement mechanisms to share lessons learned and good practice across the topic networks
- Develop metrics and provide regular updates to OSR on progress towards meeting the performance goals

We have been encouraged in discussions with the EHSSG Chair and secretariat since our November 2017 Conference. The EHSSG has the potential to be the vehicle for delivering vital change and members have the will. It also needs the resource and commitment of a wide range of people, including those in the most senior roles to support the work.

Allowing users' voices to be more prominent in health and social care statistics is a major challenge and yet also a major opportunity. We will ask for regular progress updates, holding the EHSSG to account for delivery against your action plan. Should progress not be in line with our expectations we will consider further intervention.

My team and I will be happy to talk with you about this work at any point you should wish. I am copying this letter to members of the Round Table and Chief Executives supporting this work.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation